

# **Civil Contingencies**

**Chorley Borough Council**

**Audit 2005-2006**

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For further information on the work of the Commission please contact:

Audit Commission, 1st Floor, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London SW1P 4HQ

Tel: 020 7828 1212 Fax: 020 7976 6187 Textphone (minicom): 020 7630 0421

[www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk)

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### Introduction

- 1 The Civil Contingencies Bill received Royal Assent in November 2004. The new Act is intended to standardise civil protection in the UK, and to build more resilient communities more able to face any potential emergency. Regulations and guidance that explain the Act have been issued and full implementation is required by April 2006.
- 2 Local authorities have seven main duties:
  - risk assessment;
  - business continuity management (BCM);
  - emergency planning;
  - maintaining public awareness and arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public;
  - promotion of BCM to the commercial sector and to voluntary organisations;
  - co-operation; and
  - information sharing.

### Background

- 3 Chorley Borough Council, like many authorities, has a history of emergency planning as a response to both major and minor incidents in co-operation with Lancashire County Council and the emergency services, and organisational arrangements are designed around this requirement. The Council has not so far been legally required to respond to requirements to increase the resilience of services, and encourage local businesses to equip themselves to maintain continuity through a major incident. The new requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act, presents an increased risk and in response to this, the Audit and Inspection Plan included a high-level assessment of the Council's awareness and preparedness.

### Audit approach

- 4 The approach to this audit was to use a self-assessment checklist based on the 'Self-assessment tool: local authority emergency planning and business continuity'.
- 5 Following the receipt of the self-assessment, interviews were carried out with the Emergency Planning Officer, Head of CuDOSS and the Lancashire County Council Emergency Planning Liaison Officer. A number of key related documents were also reviewed.

## Main conclusions

### Overview

- 6 Chorley Borough Council has responded to the Civil Contingencies Act and has updated their Emergency Plan and developed a Business Continuity Plan. The main elements to comply with the Act appear to be in place or under development.
- 7 Training has been provided where needed and is included in the staff appraisal process for ongoing training.
- 8 Tests were carried out throughout Lancashire to establish if there were enough resources to operate ten rest centres at the same time. This proved successful, but arrangements to ensure that contractors and suppliers can, where relevant, support the Authority during an emergency, are not uniformly in place. It is important that not only is the emergency dealt with but that critical services are also maintained, and steps should be taken to develop a purchasing policy which includes these elements.

#### ***Recommendation – Purchasing policy***

*R1 Develop a purchasing policy which specifies the requirement for support during emergencies where this is identified as relevant.*

### Risk assessment

- 9 The Community Risk Register has to be created under the Civil Contingencies Act and must cover the area of the Local Resilience Forum. The major hazards within the local and surrounding areas have been identified and documented and will be part of the Community Risk Register which was published on 14 November 2005 and can be accessed by the public via the LANMIC website with a link from Chorley's website. For Chorley, the major risk is flooding, and exercises have been carried out to assist in preparedness.
- 10 There is an internal Risk Management Board which meets quarterly and has one elected member attending. This Board receives reports on the Civil Contingencies Act as well as dealing with internal risks.
- 11 Although the risk assessment results are seen by senior management team, and a summary is included in the annual service/business plans, which are sent to cabinet, there is no regular reporting to members on risk or progress on implementing the Civil Contingencies Act. It is essential that elected members are informed and supportive of the measures necessary to implement the Act.

#### ***Recommendation – Elected members***

*R2 Take regular reports to members on progress in implementing the Civil Contingencies Act.*

## Business and service continuity

- 12 Business Continuity Plans have been developed by Chorley in consultation with Zurich Municipal. These appear to be comprehensive and cover all areas of the Council. There is a Business Continuity Group which meets bi-annually and is tasked with ensuring that plans are kept up-to-date.
- 13 There is, however, no evidence of elected members being involved with or understanding the need for Business Continuity Plans or any part they may have to play.

### ***Recommendation – Elected members***

*R3 Ensure that elected members are aware of business continuity and are kept updated.*

## Emergency planning

- 14 The Council is party to the plans created by the Lancashire Major Incidents Group (LANMIC) and also has a local Emergency Plan which is regularly updated. Arrangements for checking the contact details of those listed in the Chorley Emergency Plan are not defined, but it is thought they are checked annually. There should be a system of regular checking of contact details either by testing them or asking participants for updates.

### ***Recommendation – Contact details***

*R4 Formalise the frequency and method of keeping contact details up-to-date and carry out regular checks.*

- 15 LANMIC will form the basis of the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) as described in the Civil Contingencies Act, but final agreement on representation has not yet been reached. Whereas Lancashire County Council has represented the district councils on LANMIC, as category 1 responders, under the new Act, the districts will be entitled to attend LRF meetings. The Act allows and encourages representative arrangements where there are several authorities entitled to attend one LRF, but if this approach is taken in Lancashire there will need to be effective arrangements for cascading information and decisions.
- 16 Exercises are held on a regular basis, with an annual table top exercise and observation at other exercises held in the county. Lancashire County Council organise three exercises a year, in which Chorley staff either participate or observe. Debriefs are held after the events with lessons learnt informing changes.

## Inform and warn

- 17 There is no formal strategy for raising and reinforcing public awareness of the potential for emergencies. There is some information on the Chorley website and there is a link to the LANMIC website. This is the main vehicle for the public in terms of warnings at times of emergencies, and it is hoped that the public will use it as their first choice for obtaining information. There is also a link to the Environment Agency website for flood warnings. Recent research has shown that ethnic minority communities in Yorkshire who live in areas which might flood, are least likely to be linked in to the Environment Agency's text warning arrangements. These may often include those who are most vulnerable by age and by relative poverty, which is often linked to inadequate insurance cover.
- 18 Leaflets are being produced to be included in council tax bills, and the Council has access to language line, although this may not be available in an emergency.

### ***Recommendation – Inform and warn***

*R5 Develop a strategy for raising public awareness, if appropriate in conjunction with the LRF, and monitor its effectiveness.*

## Promotion of business continuity

- 19 The duty to promote business continuity has not yet come into force, but plans to implement this duty should be in progress. As yet, Chorley has not formulated a strategy on how it will achieve this, whether this will be as an individual council, or in conjunction with LANMIC. A joint approach through a sub-group of LANMIC would ensure consistent messages within the county and mean economies of scale in terms of leaflets or other information. Any general promotional literature could then be tailored to mention specific local risks such as flooding.

### ***Recommendation – Promotion of business continuity***

*R6 Develop a strategy for promotion of business continuity, if appropriate in conjunction with the LRF, and monitor its effectiveness.*

## Joint working

- 20 Chorley works closely with Lancashire County Council and the other districts and blue light services. This is co-ordinated effectively through LANMIC and works well. There is an excellent working relationship with the District Liaison Officer from the county, who regularly attends meetings and offers advice to the Council.
- 21 Lancashire County Council also provides training for members and officers and is willing to hold briefings when it is considered necessary. Contact and joint working with voluntary agencies is via LANMIC.

## Information sharing

- 22 Chorley has an Information Management Group and is represented on the North West Information Group. However, there is no formal agreement on sharing information in the Memorandum of Understanding governing LANMIC. Consideration should be given to formalising information sharing during emergencies within the newly constituted LRF. The Act requires more information sharing between responders and the guidance provides a template for making formal requests if necessary. One of the first activities of the new LRF should be to review and formalise locally appropriate ways of sharing information.

### ***Recommendation – Information sharing***

*R7 Ensure that information sharing is formalised within the constitution of the LRF.*

## Acknowledgements

- 23 We would like to thank the staff at Chorley Borough Council and the Lancashire County Council District Liaison Officer for their assistance in completing this audit.



## Appendix 1 – Action plan

| Page no. | Recommendations   | Priority<br>1 = Low<br>2 = Med<br>3 = High | Responsibility  | Agreed | Comments   | Date          |
|----------|---|--|---|--------|--|---------------|
| 5        | R1 Develop a purchasing policy which specifies the requirement for support during emergencies where this is identified as relevant. | 2  | Head Customer, Democratic and Office Support Services | Agreed |  | May 2006      |
| 5        | R2 Take regular reports to members on progress in implementing the Civil Contingencies Act.   | 1  | Head Customer, Democratic and Office Support Services | Agreed | Regular reports to be submitted to members.  | February 2006 |
| 6        | R3 Ensure that elected members are aware of business continuity and are kept updated.   | 1  | Head Customer, Democratic and Office Support Services | Agreed | Existing BCPs do include for an escalation of any messages to members during an incident. However, it is agreed that in general the awareness of both emergency planning and business continuity needs to be raised. | February 2006 |

| Page no. | Recommendations  | Priority<br>1 = Low<br>2 = Med<br>3 = High | Responsibility   | Agreed | Comments   | Date          |
|----------|--|--|--|--------|--|---------------|
| 6        | R4 Formalise the frequency and method of keeping contact details up-to-date and carry out regular checks.                              | 1  | Head Customer, Democratic and Office Support Services  |        | Procedures with frequencies for checks to be formalised and implemented.                       | February 2006 |
| 7        | R5 Develop a strategy for raising public awareness, if appropriate in conjunction with the LRF, and monitor its effectiveness.         | 2  | Head Customer, Democratic and Office Support Services  | Agreed | Chorley BC in conjunction with the Lancashire LRF and/or other neighbouring local authorities. | May 2006      |
| 7        | R6 Develop a strategy for promotion of business continuity, if appropriate in conjunction with the LRF, and monitor its effectiveness. | 2  | Head Customer, Democratic and Office Support Services  | Agreed | Chorley BC in conjunction with the Lancashire LRF and/or other neighbouring local authorities. | May 2006      |
| 8        | R7 Ensure that information sharing is formalised within the constitution of the LRF.   | 2  | Chorley BC in conjunction with the Lancashire LRF and/or other neighbouring local authorities. | Agreed | Chorley BC in conjunction with other LRF members.  | May 2006      |